

VERTIGO

129



FABLES

WILLINGHAM • BUCKINGHAM • LEIALOHA • PEPOY

Jul '13
suggested for
mature readers
vertigocomics.com

Pardon me for going on so long about fate, but what's a personal journal for, if not to occasionally indulge oneself?

THIS WINE IS MARVELOUS.



It's been on my mind.

BLAME MY LOVELY WIFE. SHE'S TAKEN OVER THE KING'S WINE CELLARS WITH A PURPOSE.

SOMEONE HAD TO STEP IN AND PUT ORDER TO CHAOS. THE KING AND HIS...UHM...**SOCIAL SECRETARY** ARE BOTH GREAT OF HEART.



It's the nature of things that every child's fate is born in dozens, or even hundreds, of places.

BUT NEITHER COULD DISTINGUISH FINE WINE FROM **DOG PISS** IF THEIR LIVES DEPENDED ON IT.

I, FOR ONE, APPRECIATE YOUR GOOD WORKS THEN, LADY BEAUTY. IN THE **LONG** RUN, WARS AND CONQUESTS AND THE RISE AND FALL OF GREAT NATIONS ARE INSIGNIFICANT.

WINE IS IMPORTANT.



Snow Falling on Glass

Chapter Five of Snow White

Bill Willingham: writer-creator Mark Buckingham: pencils

Steve Leialoha: inks (pages 8-15, 19-20)

Andrew Pepoy: inks (pages 1-7, 16-18)

Lee Loughridge: colors Gregory Lockard: assoc. ed.

Todd Klein: letters Shelly Bond: editor

Scattered notes and asides, afterthoughts to other important matters of the moment, eventually to be collected.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE IS IMPORTANT?

TRUST.

On one day, for example, the course of my life was being decided in battle, in a Fabletown courtyard.



THE BLUE FAIRY TRUSTS ME TO ACT IN HER BEST INTEREST, IN THIS NEGOTIATION, TO MAKE SURE IT'S NOT SIMPLY A RUSE TO AVOID OTHER CERTAINTIES.

SHE BELIEVES I COULD PEEK AHEAD, IF I WANT, TO SEE IF A WEDDING IS INDEED FATED TO OCCUR.

It was being influenced and redirected on a distant shore of broken toys.



THAT WOULD BE CHEATING, THOUGH. I'M A GOOD PERSON NOW.

WELL, AT LEAST I'M A BETTER PERSON FOR THE TIME BEING. NOTHING'S EVER DECIDED FOREVER, RIGHT?

At the same time it was being scribbled in the margins of an intense wedding negotiation taking place in the Kingdom of Haven.



THE TIDE COMES IN, THE TIDE GOES OUT. WE'RE ALWAYS ON OUR WAY SOMEWHERE EVEN WHEN STANDING STILL.

SO, MISS LAKE, SHE SUSPECTS THIS NEGOTIATION IS A CHARADE?

At the time those momentous and terrible things were taking place, none knew they were also charting my life to come.



SHE DOES. AND I'LL FIND OUT, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, AS I PROMISED HER I WOULD.

BUT ONLY IN THE NORMAL COURSE OF EVENTS. I'M ENJOYING THIS TOO MUCH TO PEER AHEAD.

My life in a nutshell: insignificant bits and pieces of other stories.



OH, DEAR. MY GLASS IS EMPTY.

SHALL WE OPEN ANOTHER BOTTLE?

FABLETOWN.

A TEMPORARY FIX WON'T DO. A BROKEN ARM IS NOTHING TO TRIFLE WITH.



I'M ACUTELY AWARE OF THAT, DOCTOR SWINEHEART, BUT DO IT MY WAY, REGARDLESS.

I'M THE GREATEST PHYSICIAN IN UNCOUNTABLE WORLDS. IN AN HOUR I COULD MEND A BROKEN ARM SO THAT NO ONE COULD TELL IT WAS EVER TRAUMATIZED.

AND, IF IT'S WITHIN MY POWER, YOU'LL HAVE THAT HOUR, DOCTOR, I PROMISE.

BUT NOT JUST YET.



THIS, AT LEAST, WILL NUMB THE PAIN SOME.

JUST WALK OUT THERE, SNOW, AND BLAST HIS HEAD OFF WITH A HAND-CANNON.

THE ASSHOLE DOESN'T DESERVE ANYTHING BETTER.



AND MAYBE BLOW *MY* HEAD OFF INSTEAD, IF THE WITCHES DON'T HAVE THE SPELL FIXED. WITH A FEW CUTS I CAN BETTER GAUGE IF IT'S WORKING.

BETTER THAN COMMITTING *ALL* TO ONE ROLL OF THE DICE. BESIDES, THE OCCASION DEMANDS *BLADES*.



FUCK OCCASION. SLAPPING A MAGAZINE IN AND CHAMBERING THE FIRST ROUND IS RITUAL ENOUGH.

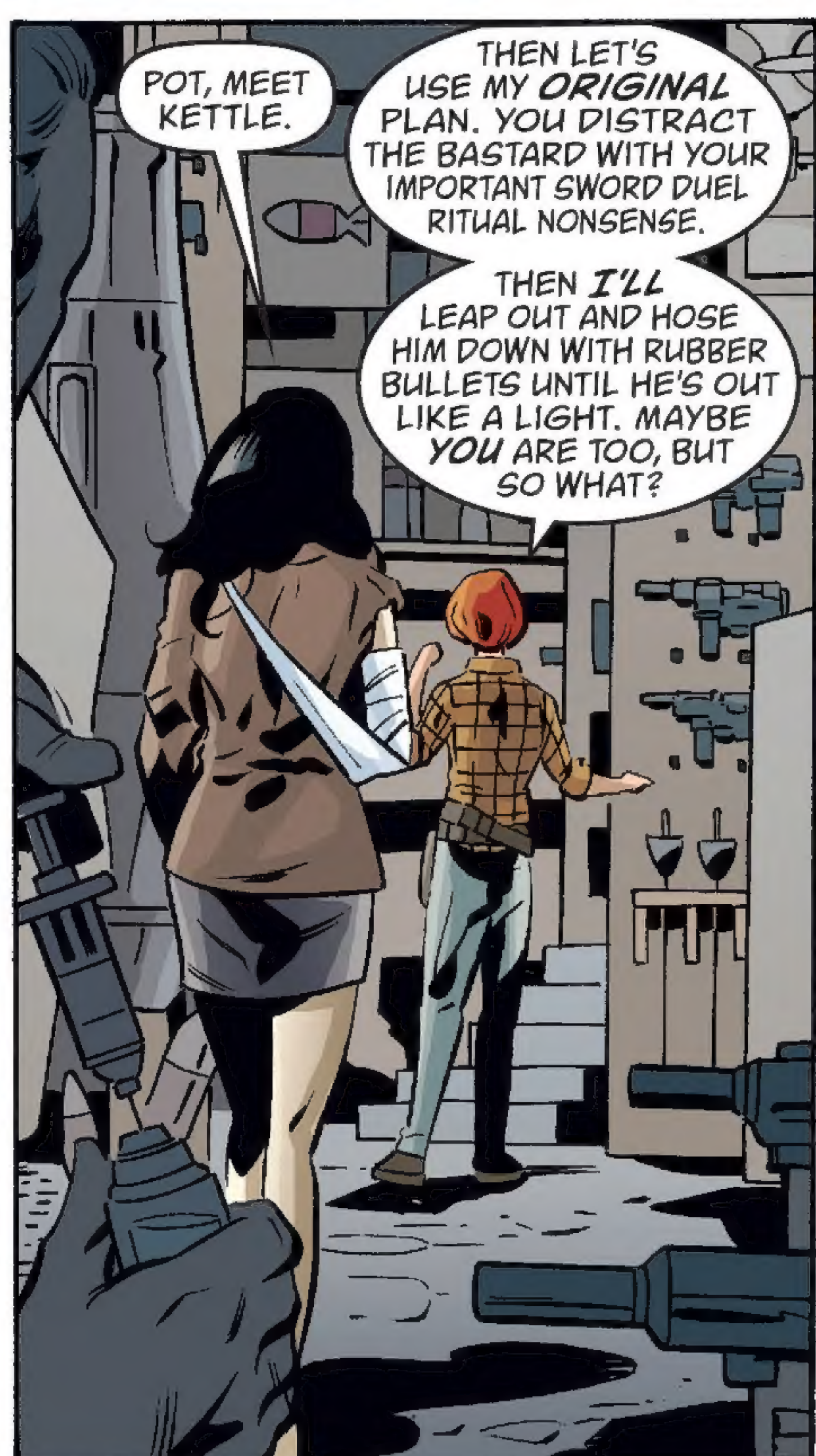
SHOOT OUT HIS *KNEECAPS* FIRST, IF YOU'RE CONCERNED IT MAY STILL REBOUND ON YOU.



NO.

I'M ADAMANT ON THIS, ROSE.

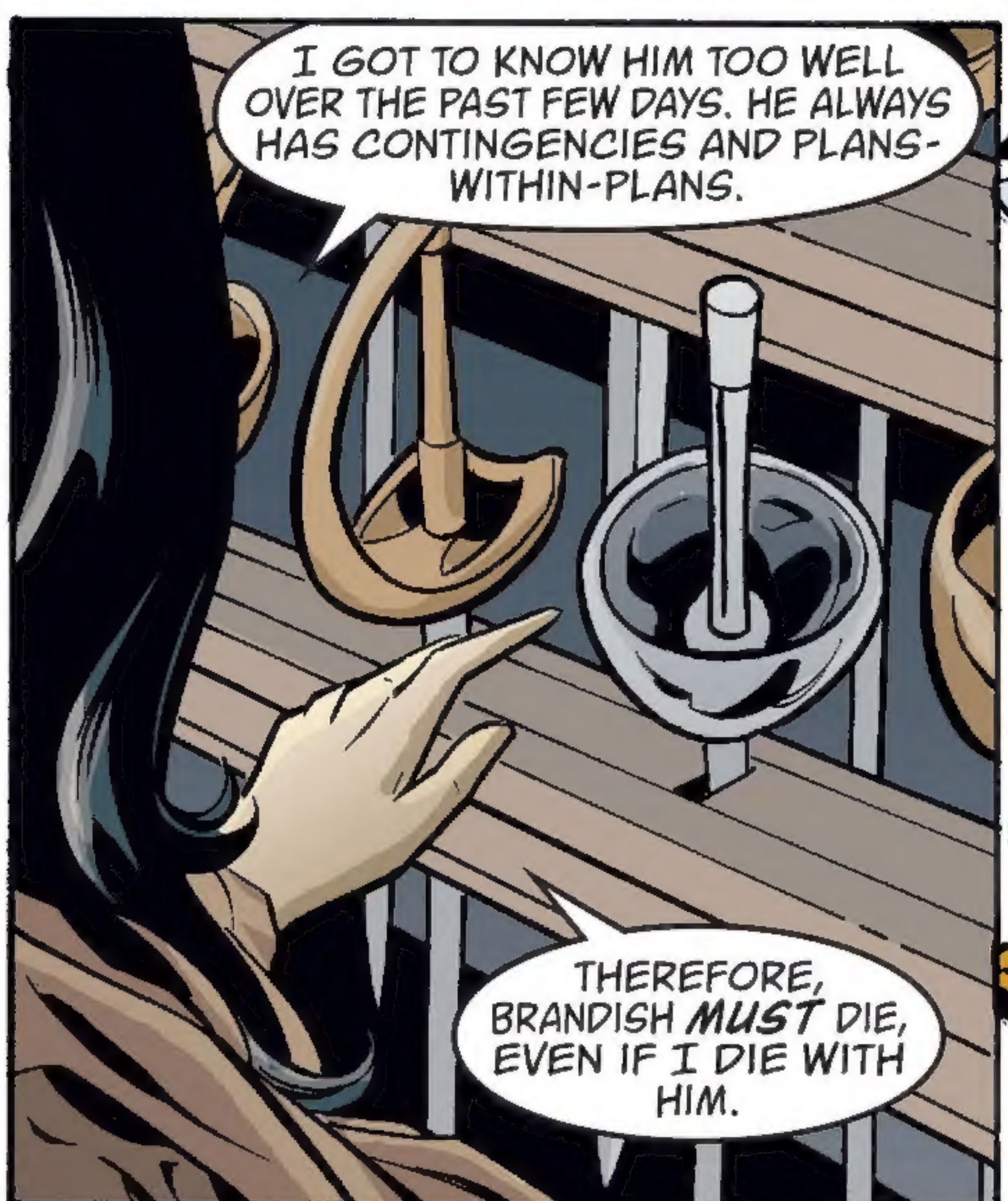
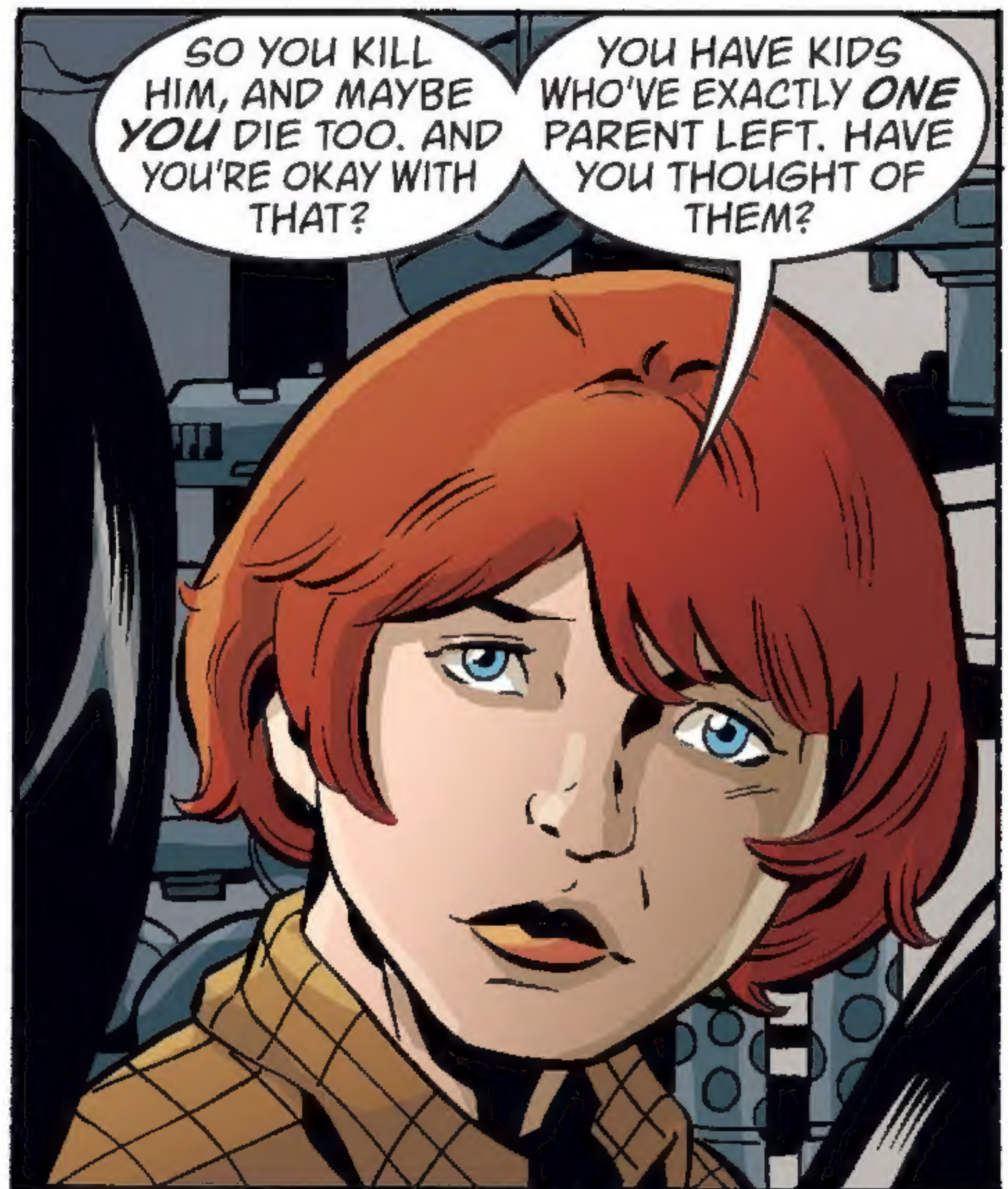
YOU CAN BE SO GODDAMN PIG-HEADED AT TIMES!



POT, MEET KETTLE.

THEN LET'S USE MY *ORIGINAL* PLAN. YOU DISTRACT THE BASTARD WITH YOUR IMPORTANT SWORD DUEL RITUAL NONSENSE.

THEN I'LL LEAP OUT AND HOSE HIM DOWN WITH RUBBER BULLETS UNTIL HE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT. MAYBE YOU ARE TOO, BUT SO WHAT?





THE ANCIENT TERROR OF THE NIGHT. THE GIANT WOLF OF THE HESSE, NOW A GLASS STATUE.

MARVELOUS.

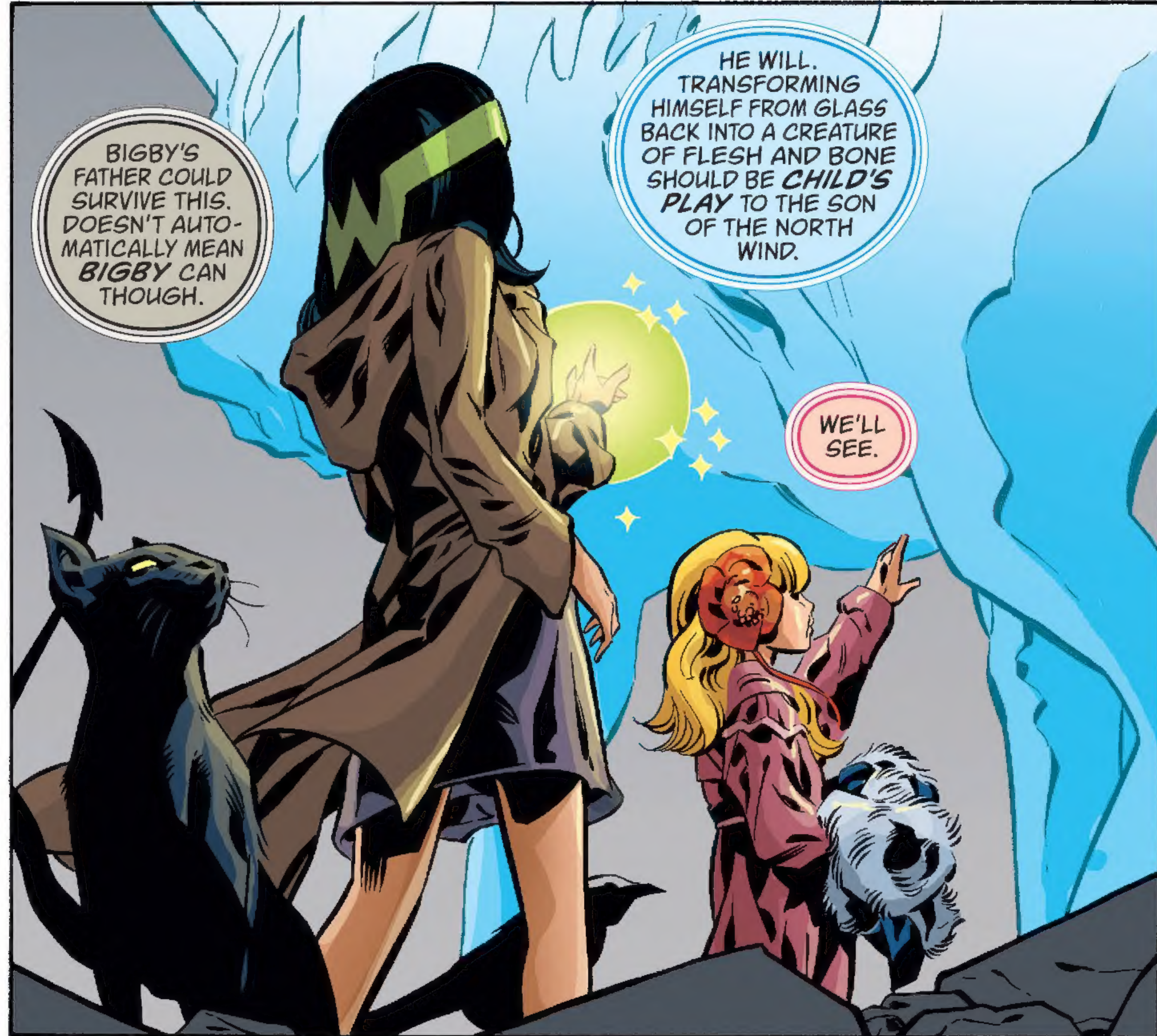
HE WILL BE THE CENTERPIECE OF MY GREAT HALL.

BUT HE'S NOT A WOLF.

NOT REALLY.

OR AT LEAST NOT ONLY A WOLF.

IS THAT ENOUGH TO WORK WITH?



BIGBY'S FATHER COULD SURVIVE THIS. DOESN'T AUTOMATICALLY MEAN BIGBY CAN THOUGH.

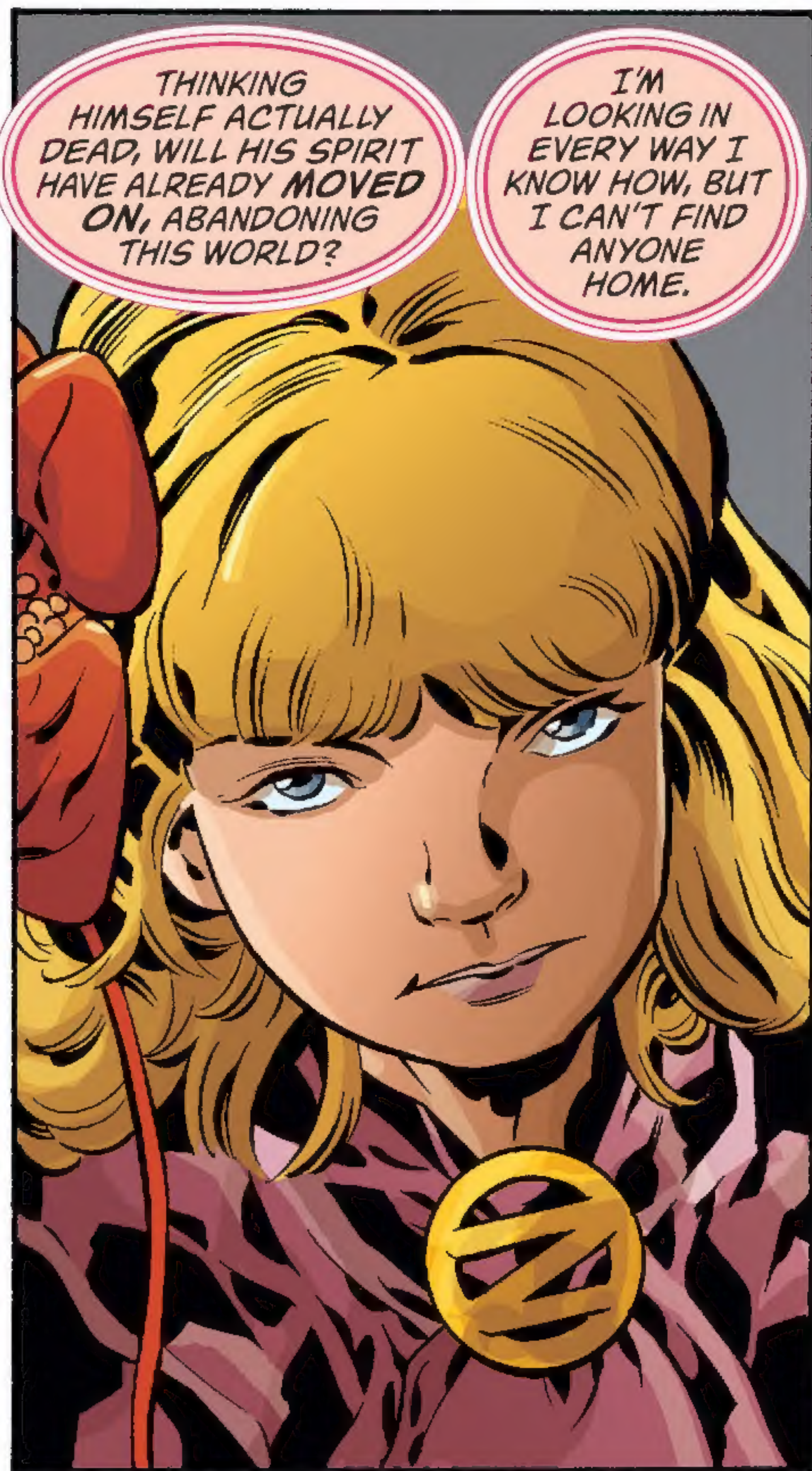
HE WILL. TRANSFORMING HIMSELF FROM GLASS BACK INTO A CREATURE OF FLESH AND BONE SHOULD BE CHILD'S PLAY TO THE SON OF THE NORTH WIND.

WE'LL SEE.



HE'D REJECTED ALL OF HIS FATHER'S POWERS--THE POWERS OF THE NORTH WIND.

AND OF EVEN GREATER CONCERN IS THE WOLF'S SPIRIT.



THINKING HIMSELF ACTUALLY DEAD, WILL HIS SPIRIT HAVE ALREADY MOVED ON, ABANDONING THIS WORLD?

I'M LOOKING IN EVERY WAY I KNOW HOW, BUT I CAN'T FIND ANYONE HOME.

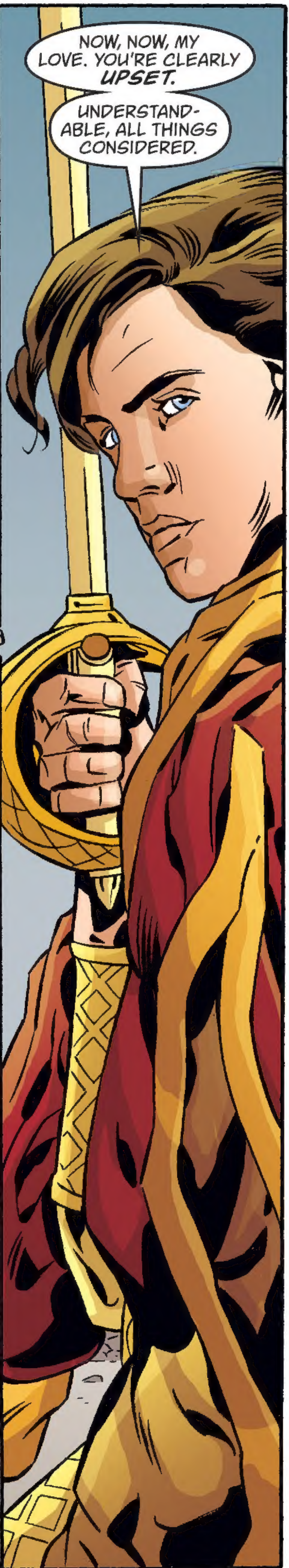


BRANDISH!
STEP UP AND DRAW **STEEL**, YOU SCURRILOUS COCKFACE!

SNOW!
HOW DID YOU GET OUT?



DOESN'T MATTER.
WHAT **DOES** MATTER IS THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS BETWEEN US.
THIS BUSINESS OF UNFULFILLED **VOWS**.



NOW, NOW, MY LOVE. YOU'RE CLEARLY **UPSET**.
UNDERSTAND-ABLE, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.



NO, NOT UPSET. THAT COMES LATER.
RESOLVED.



BIGBY NEVER LEARNED SWORDPLAY.
NEVER HAD TO.

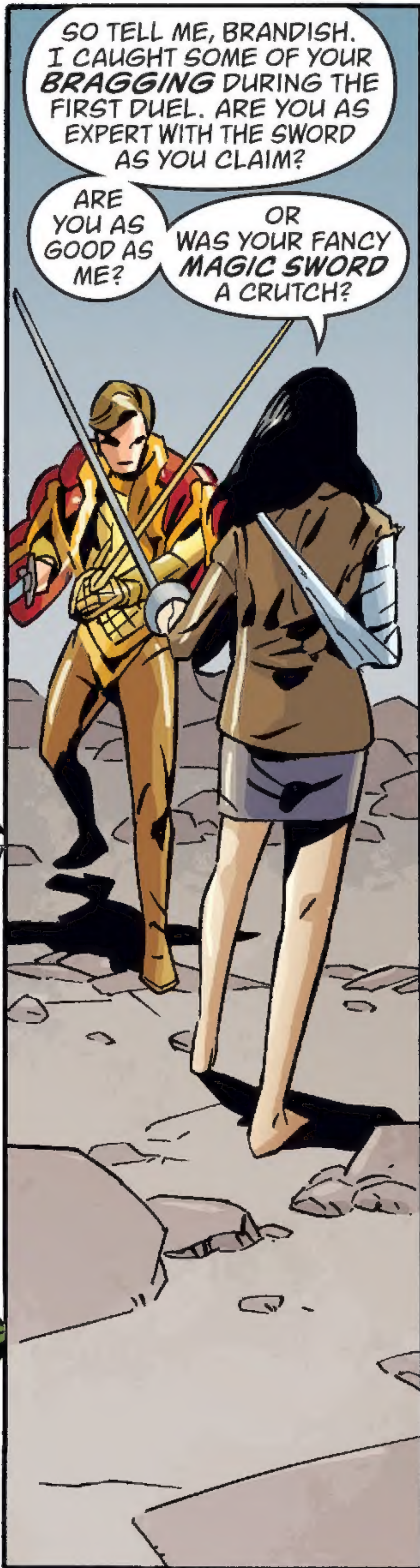


I, HOWEVER, LEARNED IT FROM THE BEST WHO EVER TOOK UP A BLADE.
LET'S SEE IF THOSE LESSONS TOOK.
NOW, SNOW. SETTLE DOWN. THINK IT OVER.
THIS IS THE SERIOUS BUSINESS OF **MEN**-- NOT FIT FOR THE DISTAFF SEX.



DID YOU DO IT? IS SNOW PROTECTED?
LET'S SEE.

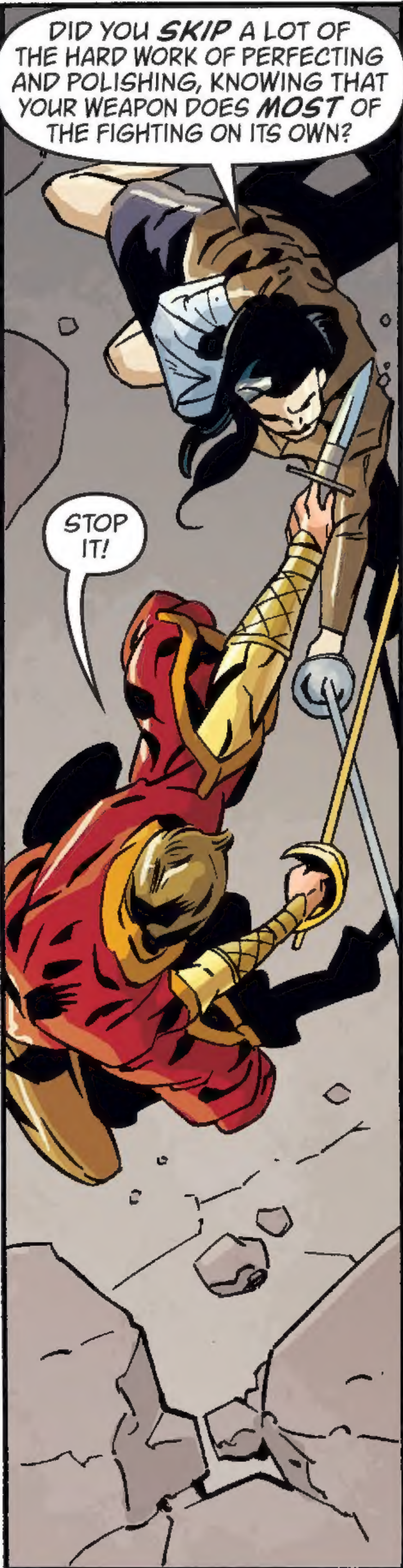




SO TELL ME, BRANDISH. I CAUGHT SOME OF YOUR **BRAGGING** DURING THE FIRST DUEL. ARE YOU AS EXPERT WITH THE SWORD AS YOU CLAIM?

ARE YOU AS GOOD AS ME?

OR WAS YOUR FANCY **MAGIC SWORD** A CRUTCH?



DID YOU *SKIP* A LOT OF THE HARD WORK OF PERFECTING AND POLISHING, KNOWING THAT YOUR WEAPON DOES **MOST** OF THE FIGHTING ON ITS OWN?

STOP IT!



I'M SERIOUS!

I THINK **MAYBE YOU DID.**



COME ON, SNOW WHITE. GIVE ME A FEW MINOR CUTS TO WORK WITH.

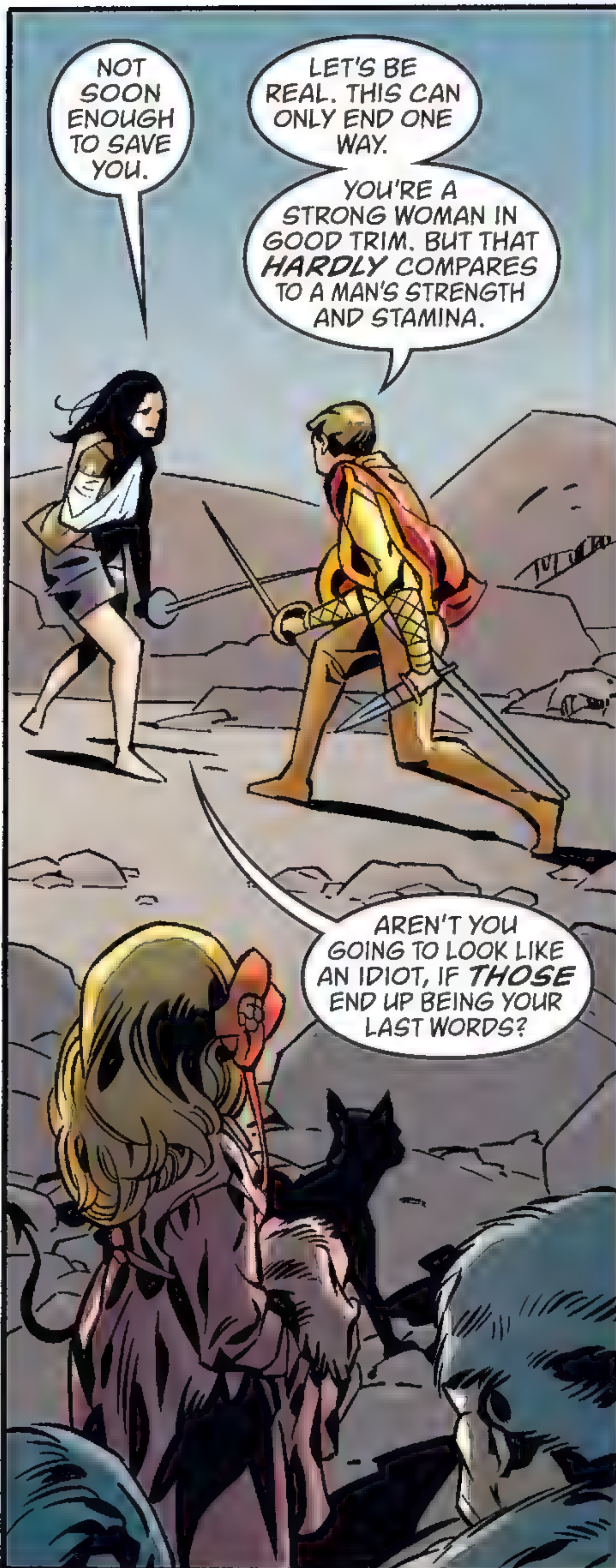
EACH ONE **INSTANTLY** TRANSFERRED TO YOU-- BUT LET'S SEE IF WE CAN REDEFINE THE MEANING OF "INSTANT."



YOU'RE **GOOD**, I'LL GRANT YOU THAT MUCH.

ALL APPROPRIATE HONOR TO YOUR TEACHER.

BUT YOU'RE ALSO TIRING FASTER THAN I.

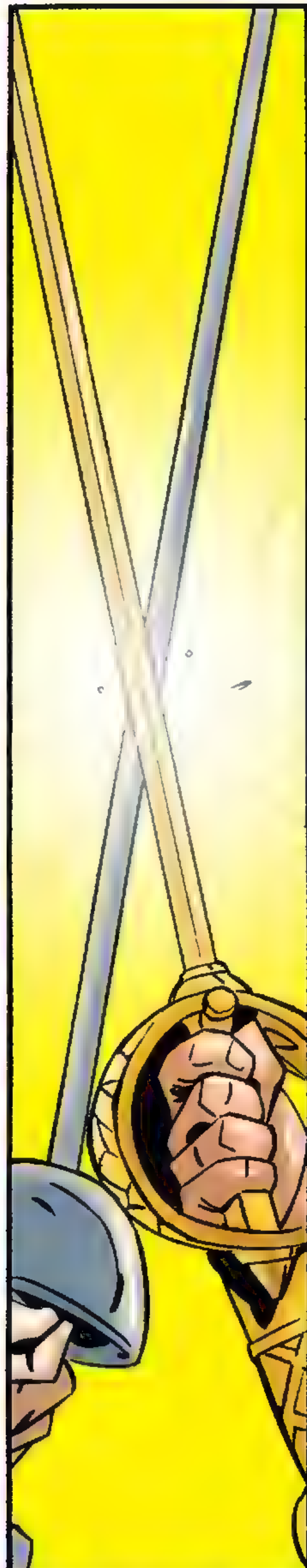


NOT SOON ENOUGH TO SAVE YOU.

LET'S BE REAL. THIS CAN ONLY END ONE WAY.

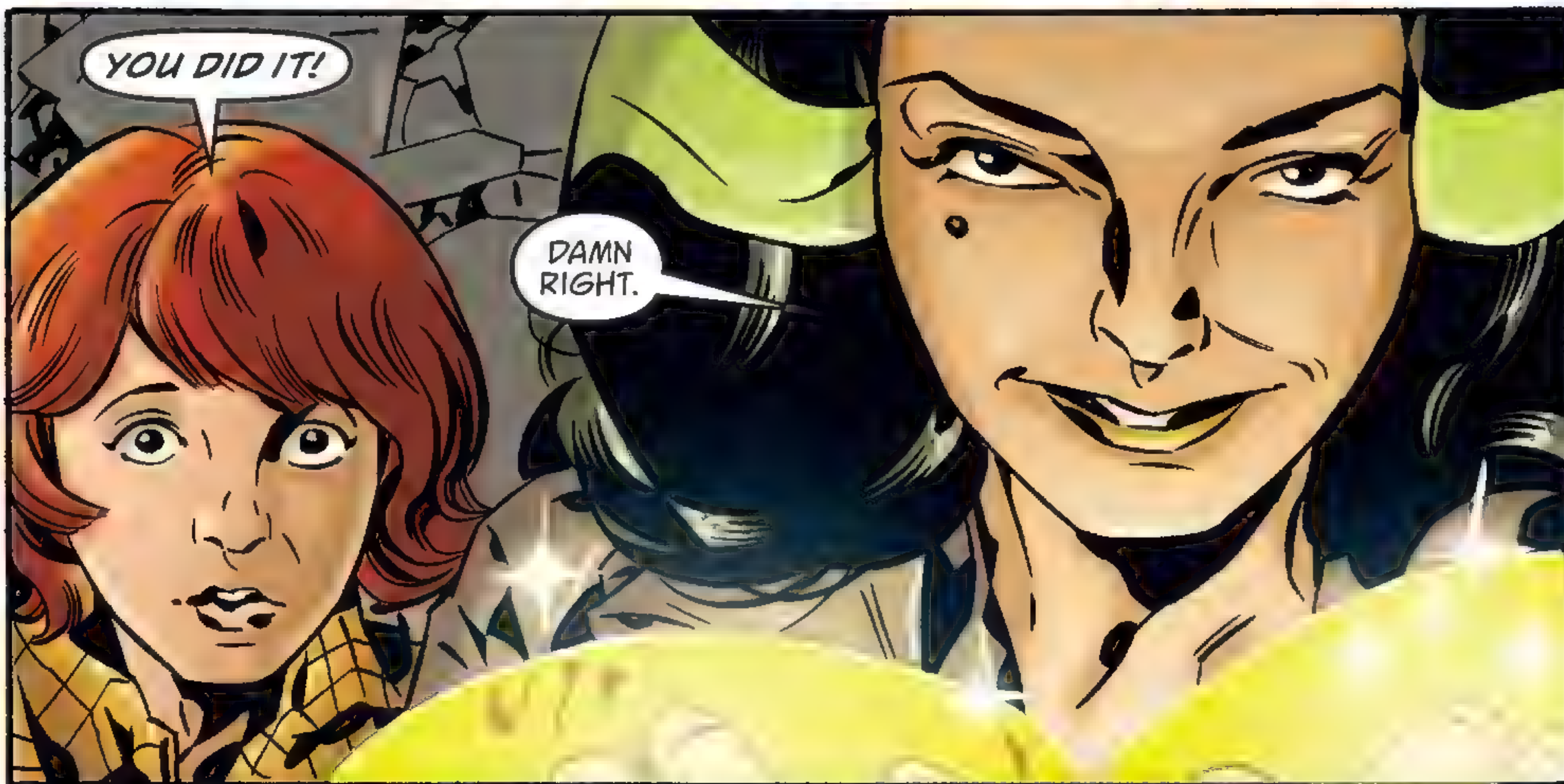
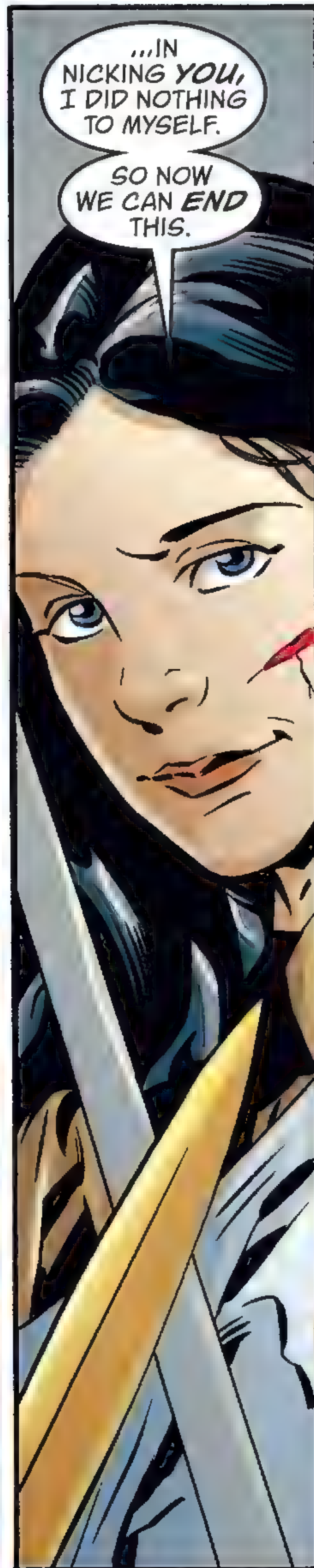
YOU'RE A STRONG WOMAN IN GOOD TRIM. BUT THAT **HARDLY** COMPARES TO A MAN'S STRENGTH AND STAMINA.

AREN'T YOU GOING TO LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT, IF **THOSE** END UP BEING YOUR LAST WORDS?



SHE IS SLOWING DOWN! SNOW DOES NEED TO END IT RIGHT NOW!

I HOPE NOT. I NEED ONE MORE SECOND.



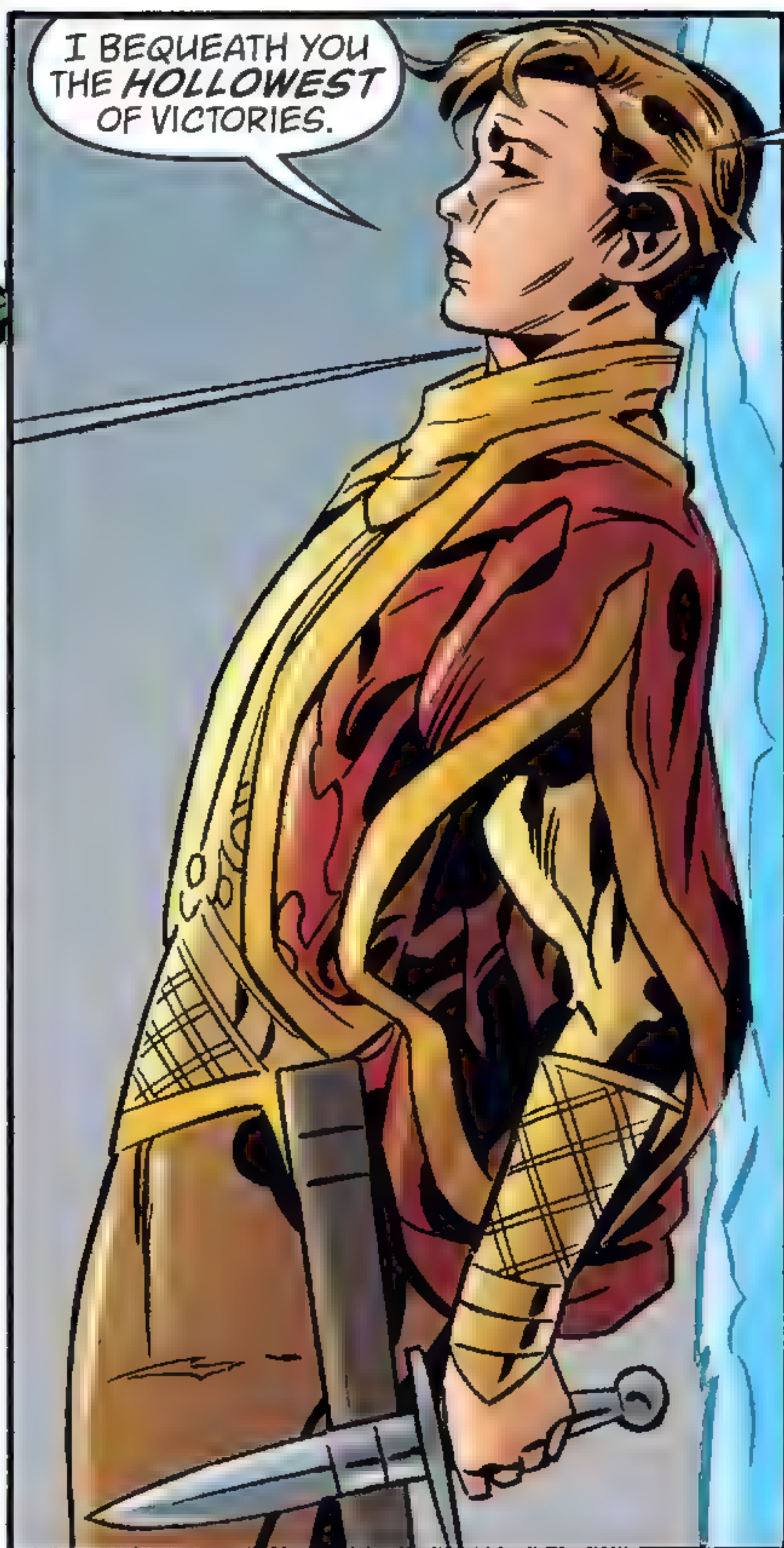




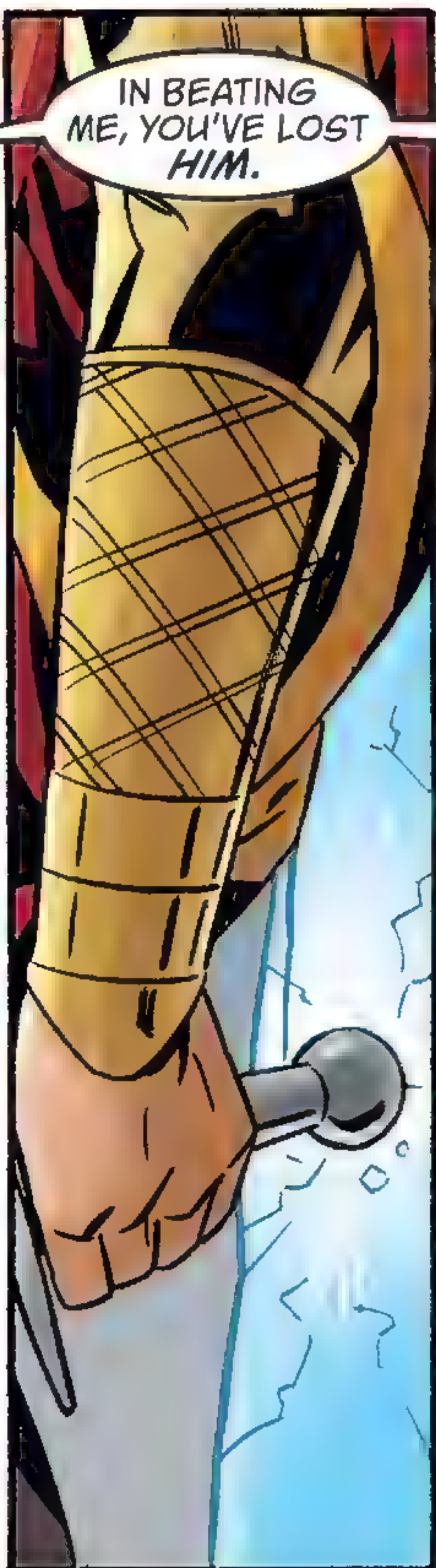
IT'S CLEAR TO BOTH OF US, YOU'RE **DONE**.

BREATHE A LAST PRAYER, IF YOU **HAVE** ONE.

A FINAL **CURSE** IS ALL I HAVE TO GIVE.



I BEQUEATH YOU THE **HOLLOWEST** OF VICTORIES.



IN BEATING ME, YOU'VE LOST **HIM**.



FOREVER.



NO!

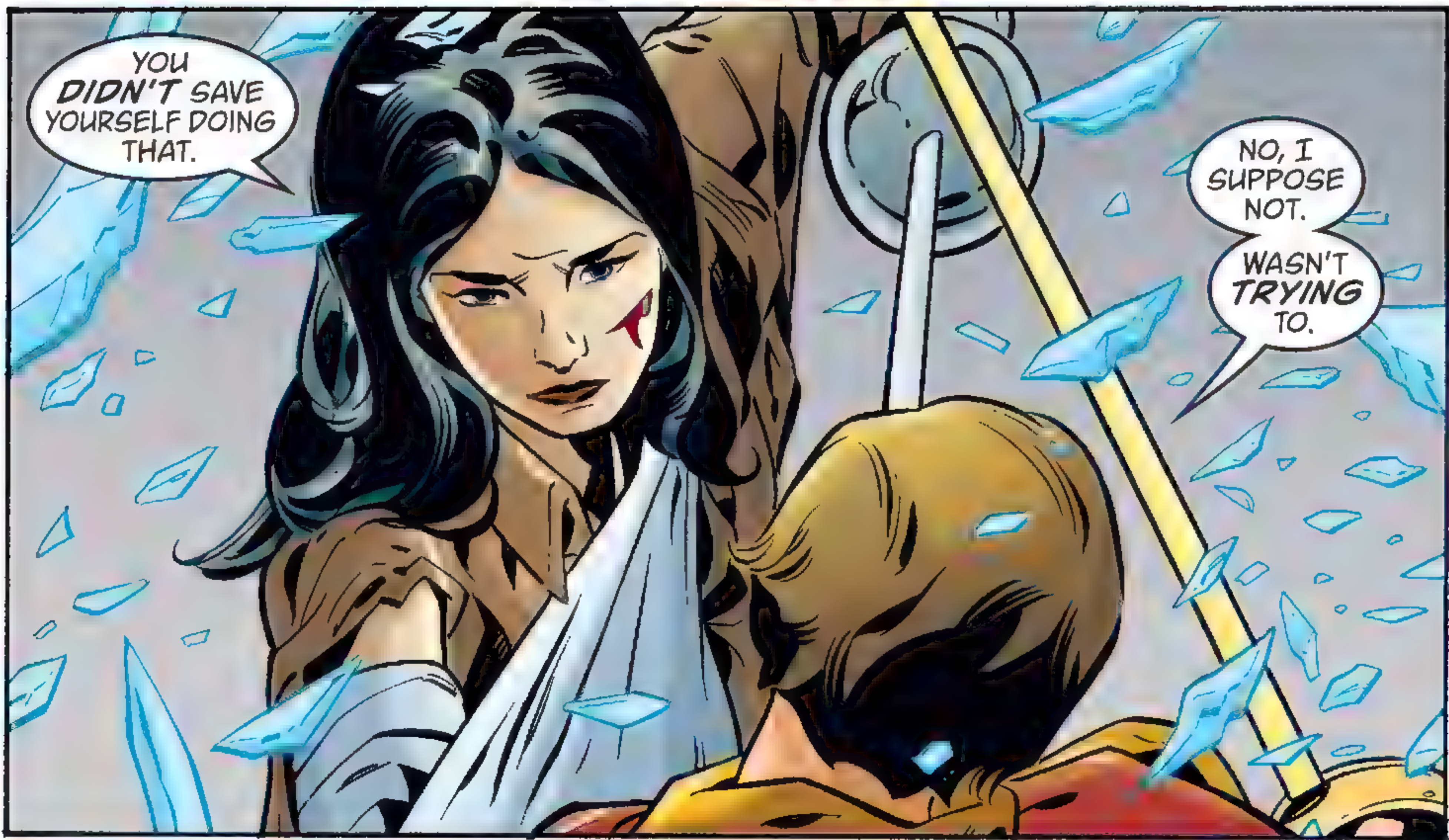
DID YOU
THINK I COULDN'T
OVERHEAR YOUR
WITCHES' SCHEMES
TO RESTORE
HIM?

THEY COULD
HAVE SAVED THEIR
ENERGY, SPEAKING
TELEPATHICALLY.

IT WAS
THE SAME TO ME
AS IF THEY'D
SCREAMED EVERY
WORD ALOUD.

TRY
RESTORING
YOUR WOLF
NOW!





YOU DIDN'T SAVE YOURSELF DOING THAT.

NO, I SUPPOSE NOT.

WASN'T TRYING TO.



DO ME A KINDNESS IN THE NEXT LIFE.



SUFFER ENDLESSLY.

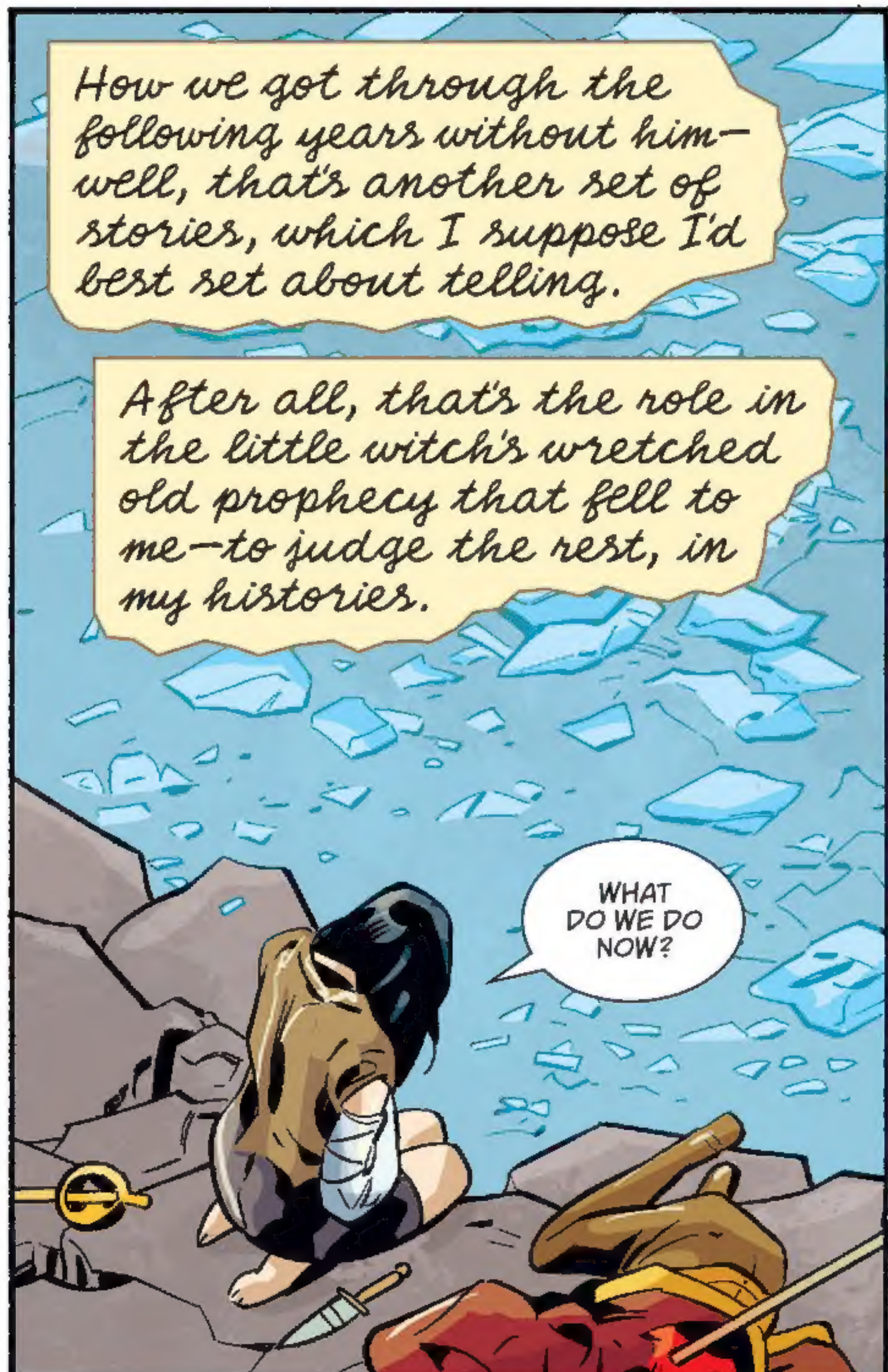
STRAIGHT THROUGH THE HEART.

TYPICAL.



And that's how my dad died.

OH, BIGBY.



How we got through the following years without him—well, that's another set of stories, which I suppose I'd best set about telling.

After all, that's the role in the little witch's wretched old prophecy that fell to me—to judge the rest, in my histories.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?



SNOW?

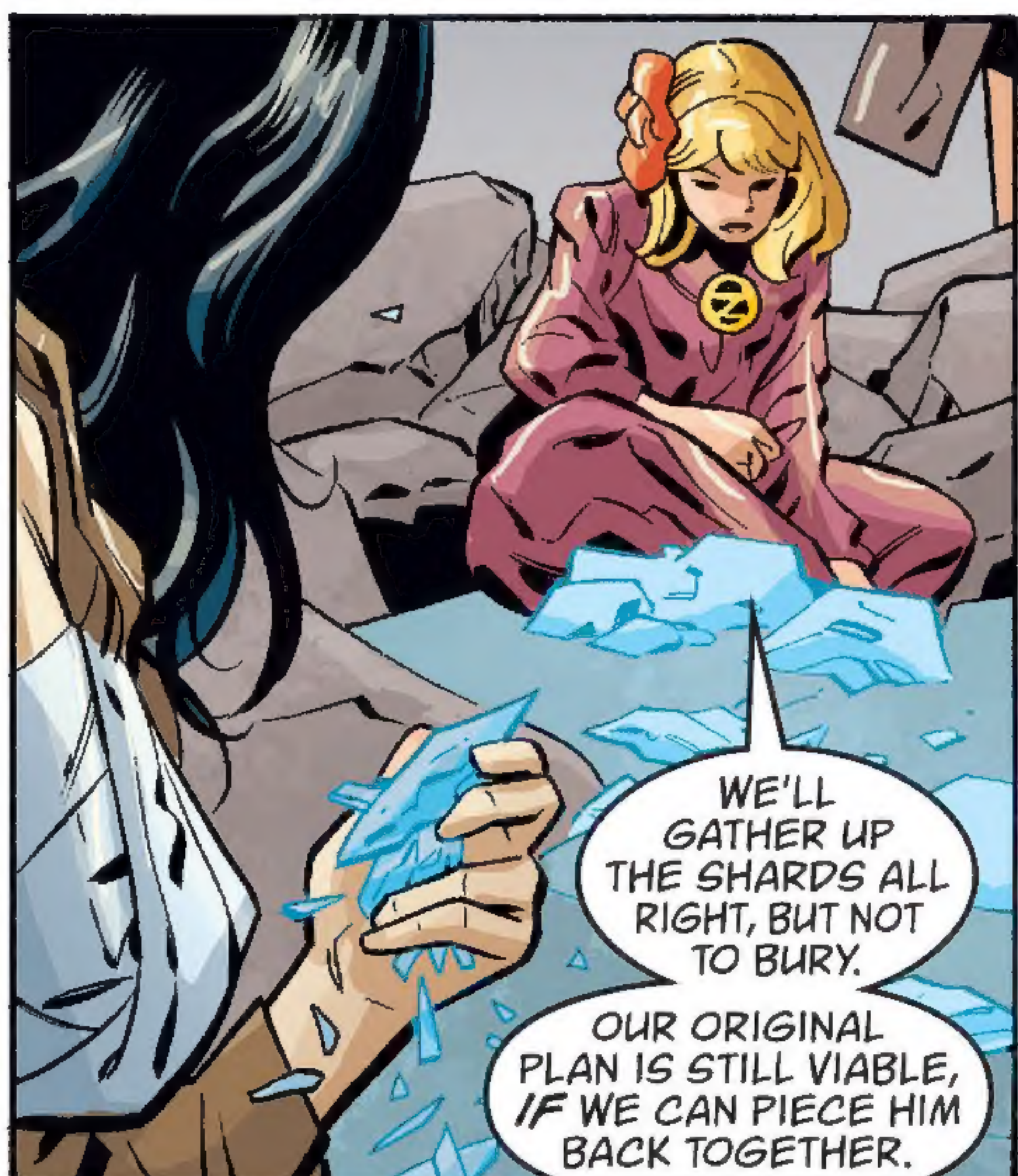
DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT GOING TO LOSE IT.

I'LL CONTINUE TO BE STRONG FOR NOW. FOR THE CHILDREN.



WE'LL GATHER WHAT WE CAN OF HIS PIECES FOR THE BURIAL.

A FORMAL FUNERAL IS IN ORDER.



WE'LL GATHER UP THE SHARDS ALL RIGHT, BUT NOT TO BURY.

OUR ORIGINAL PLAN IS STILL VIABLE, IF WE CAN PIECE HIM BACK TOGETHER.

My mother didn't keep the bad news from us. She wasn't the type, even if she couldn't help trying to soften the blow with a bit of hope.

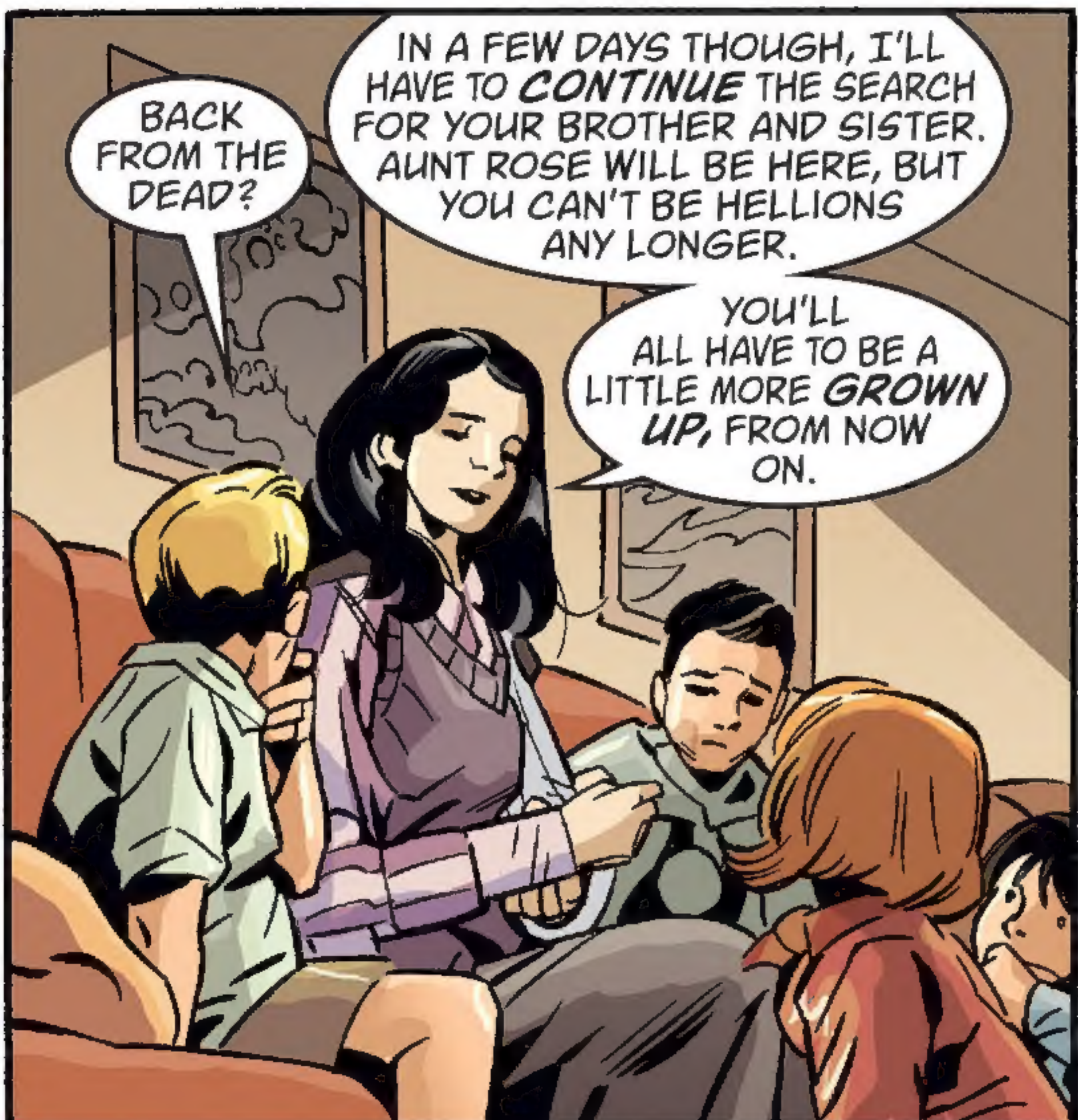


AND SO, IF THE WITCHES ARE RIGHT, THERE'S A POSSIBILITY, A **REMOTE** ONE, THAT YOUR DADDY COULD COME BACK TO US SOMEDAY.

BACK FROM THE DEAD?

IN A FEW DAYS THOUGH, I'LL HAVE TO **CONTINUE** THE SEARCH FOR YOUR BROTHER AND SISTER. AUNT ROSE WILL BE HERE, BUT YOU CAN'T BE HELLIONS ANY LONGER.

YOU'LL ALL HAVE TO BE A LITTLE MORE **GROWN UP**, FROM NOW ON.

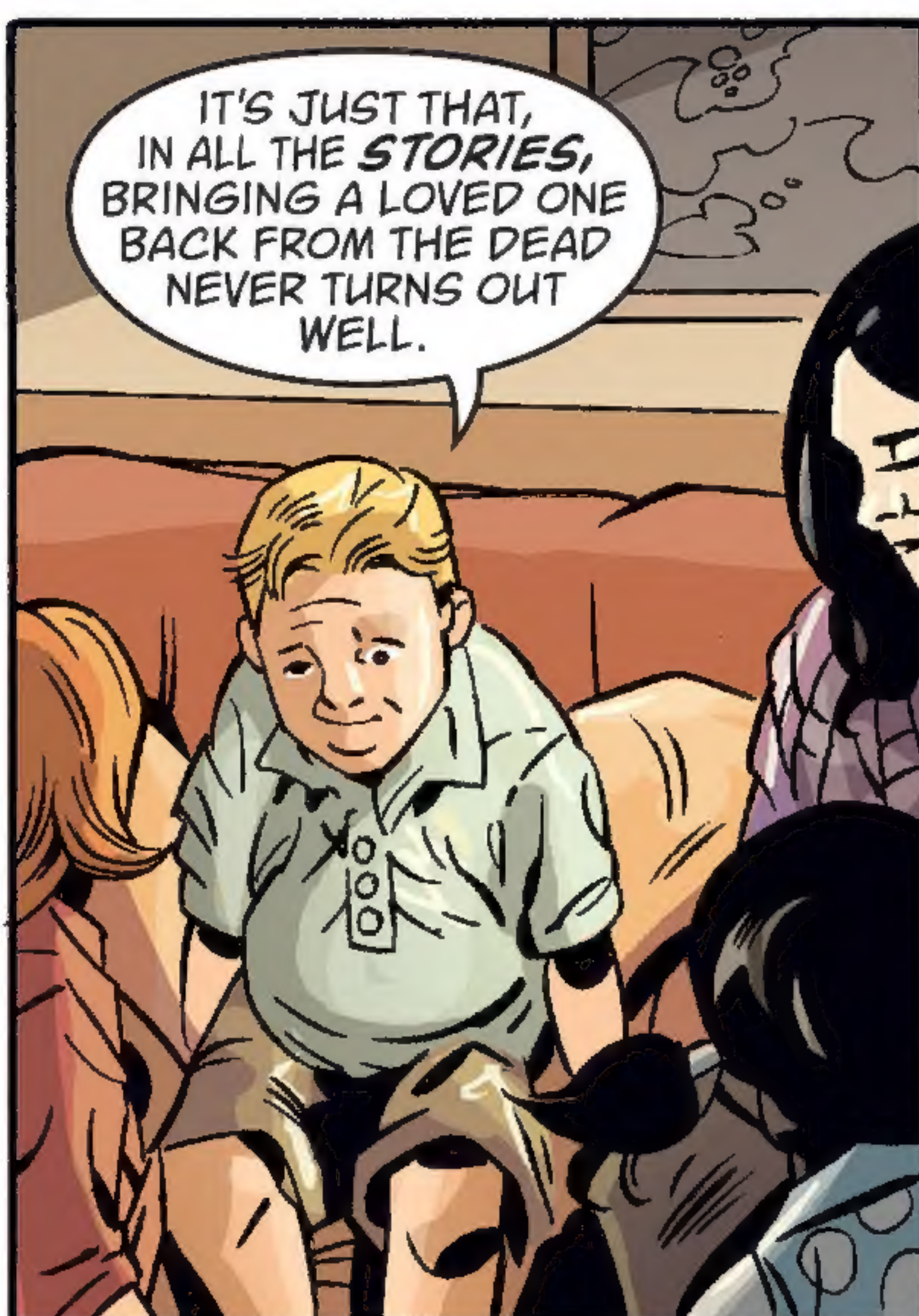


BACK FROM THE DEAD?

WHY DO YOU **KEEP** SAYING THAT?



IT'S JUST THAT, IN ALL THE **STORIES**, BRINGING A LOVED ONE BACK FROM THE DEAD NEVER TURNS OUT WELL.



AND AREN'T **WE** THE PEOPLE IN THE STORIES?



KNOCK KNOCK

WHO COULD THAT BE?



IT'S TOO **SOON** FOR VISITORS TO COME CALLING TO PAY RESPECTS.





MOM?

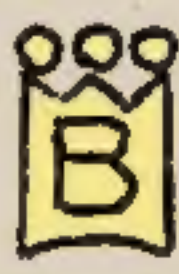
!

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU RECOGNIZE ME. THE YEARS PASSED DIFFERENTLY WHERE I...

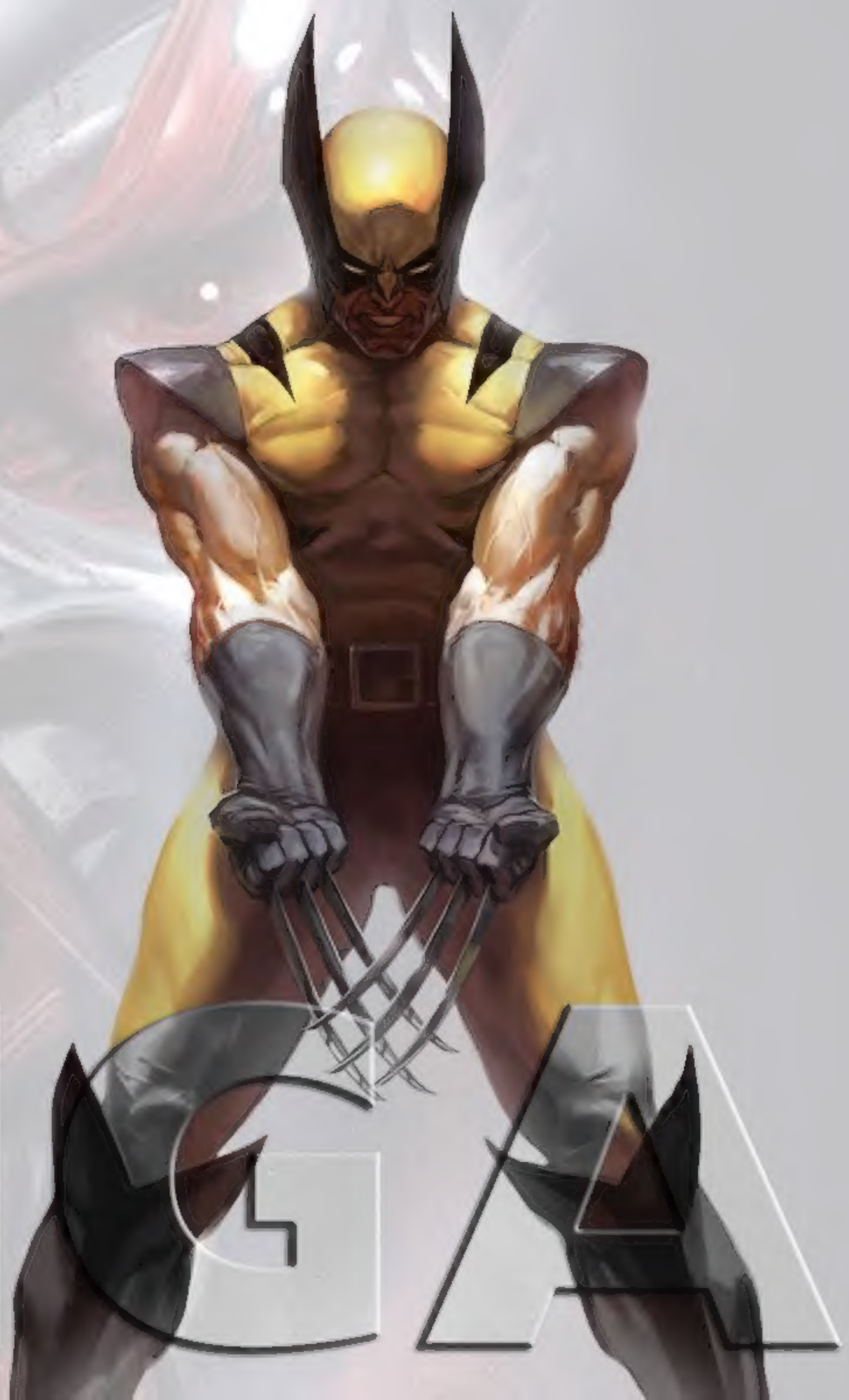
I'M THERESE.

I'VE COME HOME TO TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED TO DARE--HOW HE SAVED ME.

WHERE'S DAD?



NEXT: A SMALL MATTER OF MONSTERS LURKING IN SHADOWS.



NATHAN